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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0641
INFO RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR IMMEDIATE 0028
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH IMMEDIATE 0065
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS KUALA LUMPUR 000159

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

FOR IO/UNP, AF/W AND EAP/MTS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [OIC](#) [KISL](#) [SG](#) [MY](#)

SUBJECT: MALAYSIA AND OIC SPECIAL ENVOY CUMBER'S REQUEST
FOR MEETING AT OIC SUMMIT

REF: STATE 23596

¶1. (U) We informed the Malaysian Foreign Ministry's OIC division on March 7 of Special Envoy Cumber's interest in a meeting with the Malaysian delegation at the OIC Summit in Dakar. We also provided contact telephone numbers per reftel. We have copied the same information to Malaysia's chief OIC diplomat, Ambassador Ibrahim Abdullah, who arrived in Senegal today. Ambassador Ibrahim's cell phone number is 60-12-334-5957. Ambassador Ibrahim has an excellent command of English. Post provides background on Malaysia's OIC role and related policies below.

¶2. (SBU) OIC Role, Areas for Cooperation: Malaysia has served as Chairman of the OIC since October 2003. Acting in this role, Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi has attempted to "put an economic face" on the OIC by focusing on economic development, education, and trade and investment within the Islamic world. Malaysian has sought to develop an OIC capacity building program to reduce poverty and has supported the World Islamic Economic Forum to enhance trade and investment, often using Malaysia's own economic success as a reference. Prime Minister Abdullah has leveraged his OIC chairmanship to bolster his government's goal of strengthening trade and investment ties with OIC countries; trade between Malaysia and OIC members reportedly increased 54 percent from 2004 to 2007. Malaysia is most likely to be receptive to U.S. collaboration in areas related to promoting advanced technology, educational opportunities, and possibly Islamic finance.

¶3. (SBU) Malaysia and Inter-Faith Dialogue: Malaysia perceives itself as playing "a key role in promoting dialogue between the West and the Muslim World," according to the current Malaysian ruling coalition manifesto. Prime Minister Abdullah promotes the concept of "Islam Hadhari," described as a model for "progressive Islamic civilization," with an emphasis on economic and technological advancement. Prime Minister Abdullah often has engaged in inter-religious dialogues on the international stage, most recently in January at the Alliance of Civilizations forum in Madrid. At home, however, the Malaysian government has struggled with growing controversies regarding the rights of the country's 40 percent non-Muslim population, and has stopped public discussion of some inter-faith issues, like the religious freedom clause in the constitution, perceived as too sensitive and a threat to national stability.

¶4. (SBU) Foreign Policy Elements: The Palestine issue has great resonance among Malaysia's Muslim population, and features prominently in Malaysia's foreign policy pronouncements. Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar took part in the Annapolis Conference, but Malaysia does not

have diplomatic relations with Israel. Malaysia contributes peacekeepers to UNIFIL. Malaysia has opposed U.S. actions in Iraq, while some leaders have quietly acknowledged the importance of the U.S. and NATO role in Afghanistan. Shia Islam is banned in Malaysia, but the Malaysian public appears generally sympathetic to Iran in its perceived stand-off with the West over its nuclear program.

KEITH